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(54) **POLYCRYSTALLINE DIAMOND CUTTERS HAVING NON-CATALYTIC MATERIAL ADDITION AND METHODS OF MAKING THE SAME**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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Polycrystalline diamond cutters for rotary drill bits and methods of making the same are disclosed. Polycrystalline diamond cutters include a support substrate and a polycrystalline diamond body coupled to the support substrate. The polycrystalline diamond body includes a plurality of diamond grains exhibiting inter-diamond bonding therebetween and defining a plurality of interstitial regions, a non-catalytic material distributed throughout the polycrystalline diamond body in a detectable amount, and a catalytic material distributed throughout the polycrystalline diamond body in a detectable amount.

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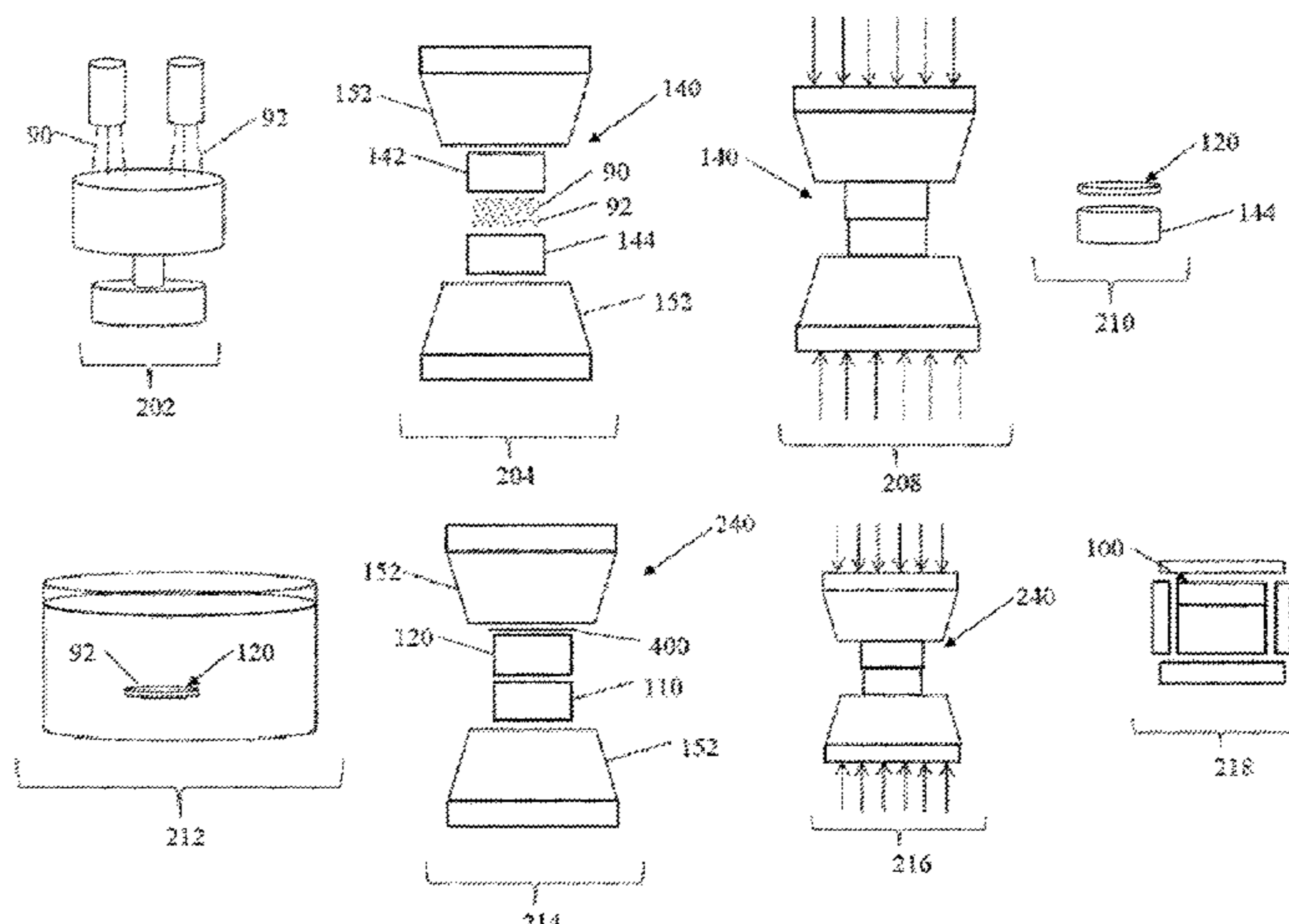
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9 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



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| (58) | Field of Classification Search
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See application file for complete search history. | | |

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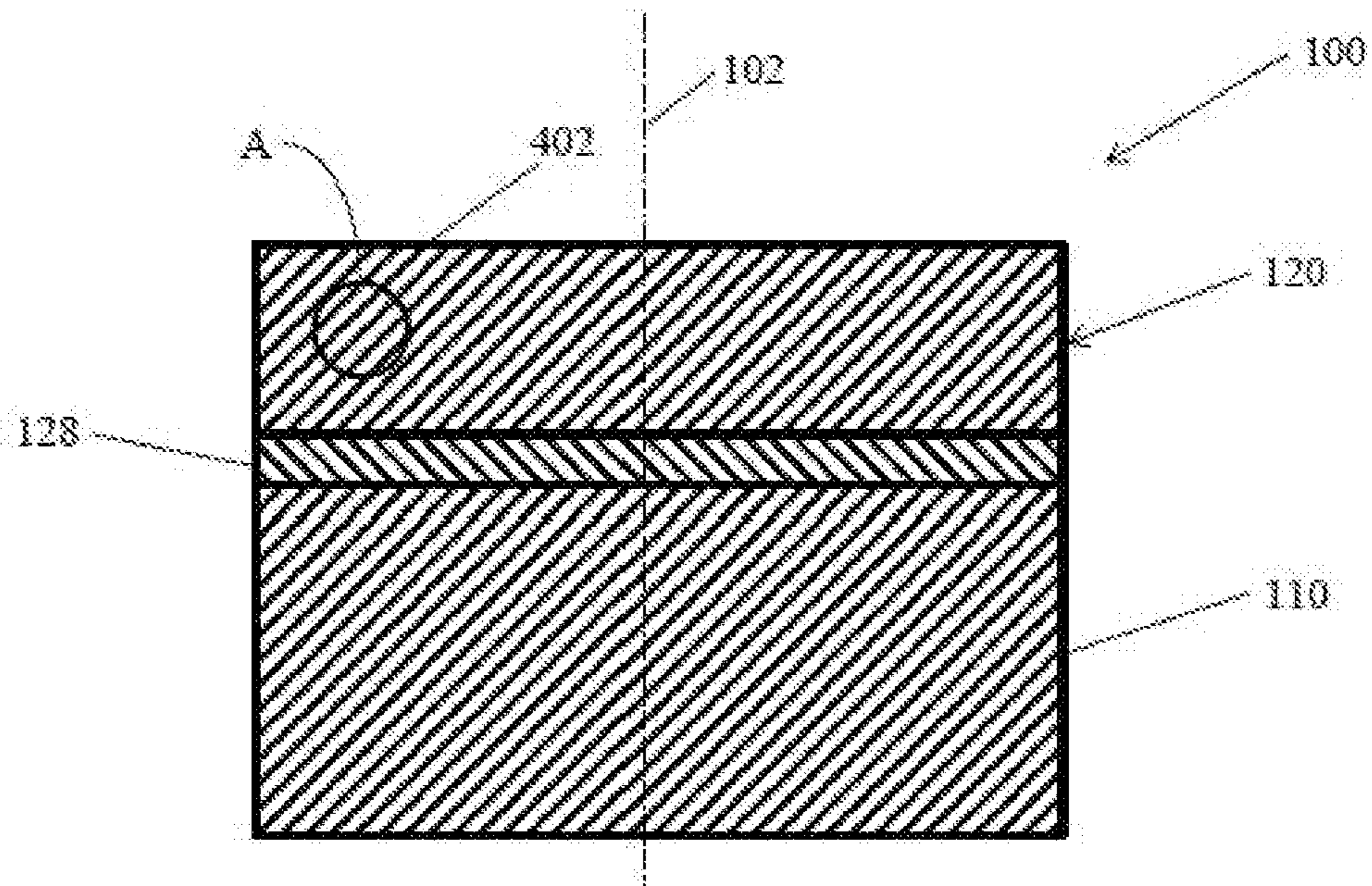


FIG. 1

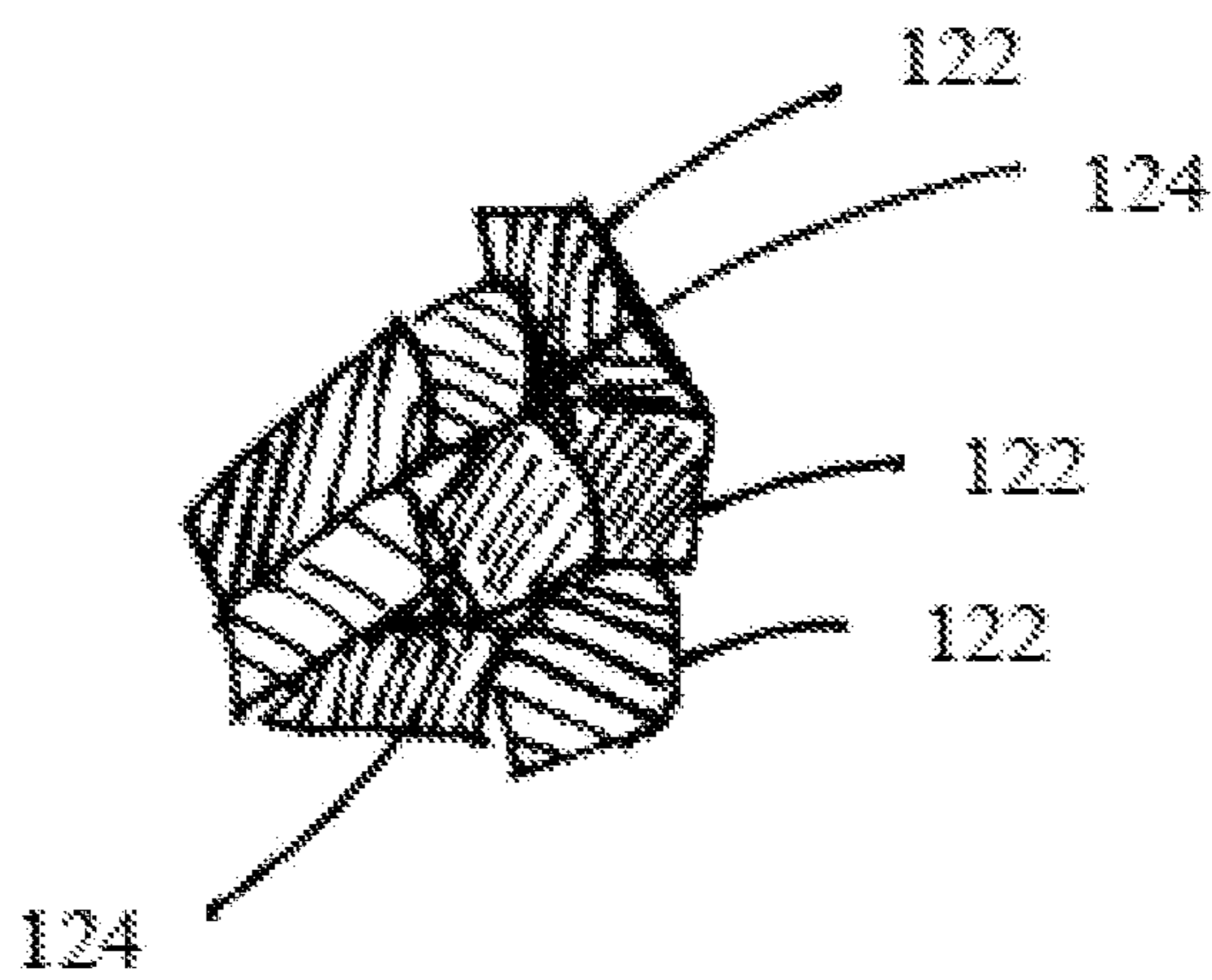


FIG. 2

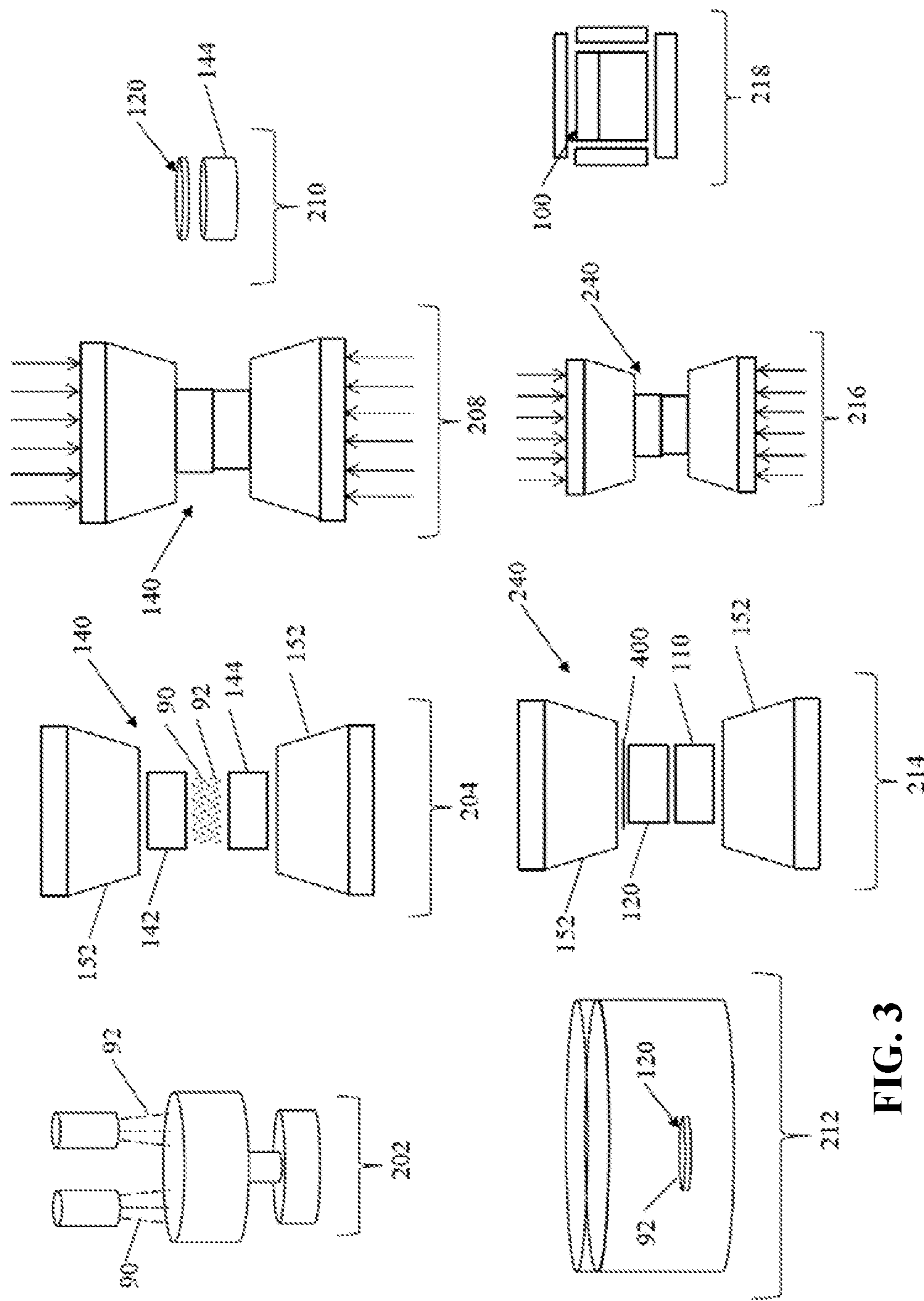


FIG. 3

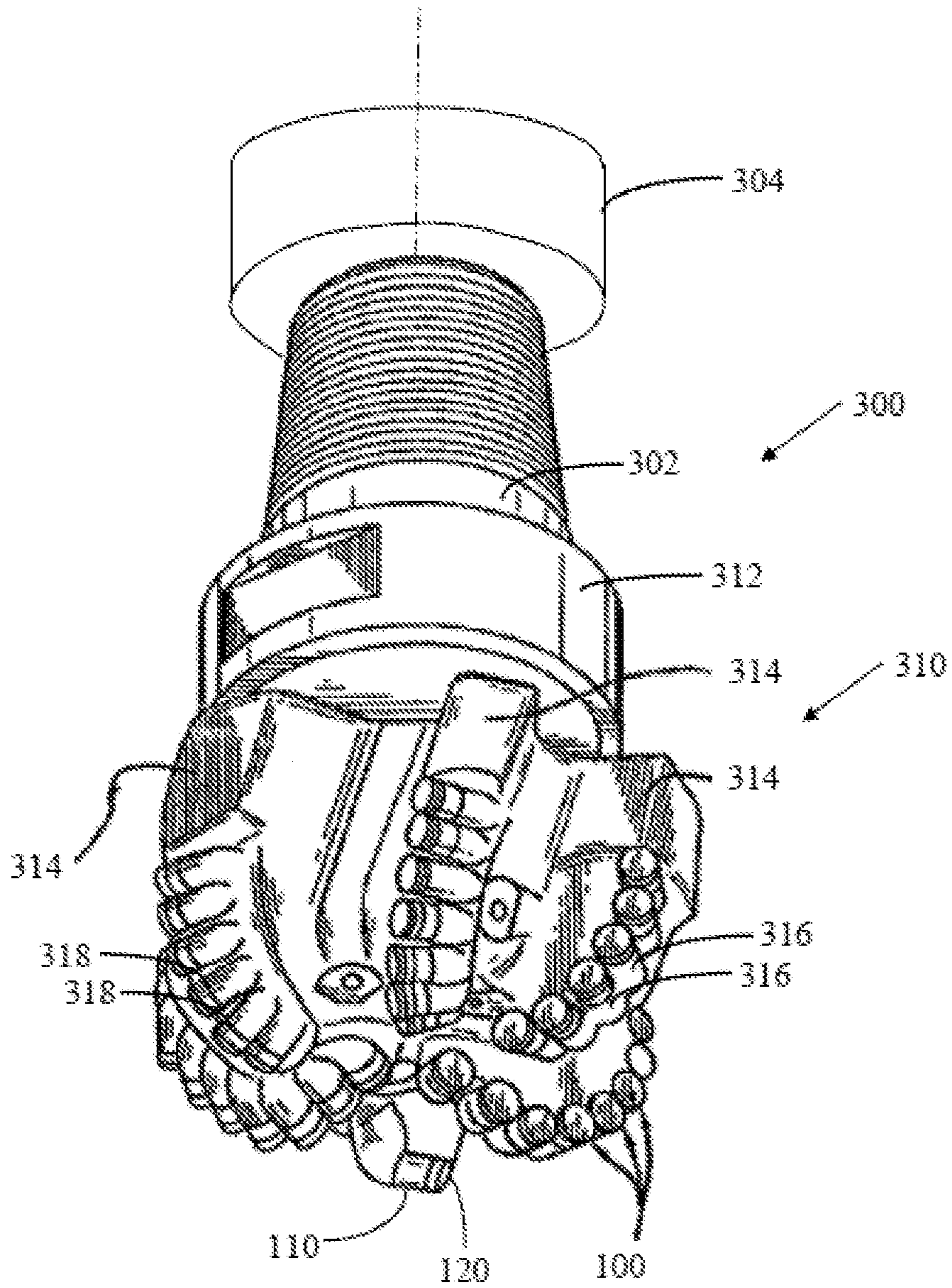


FIG. 4

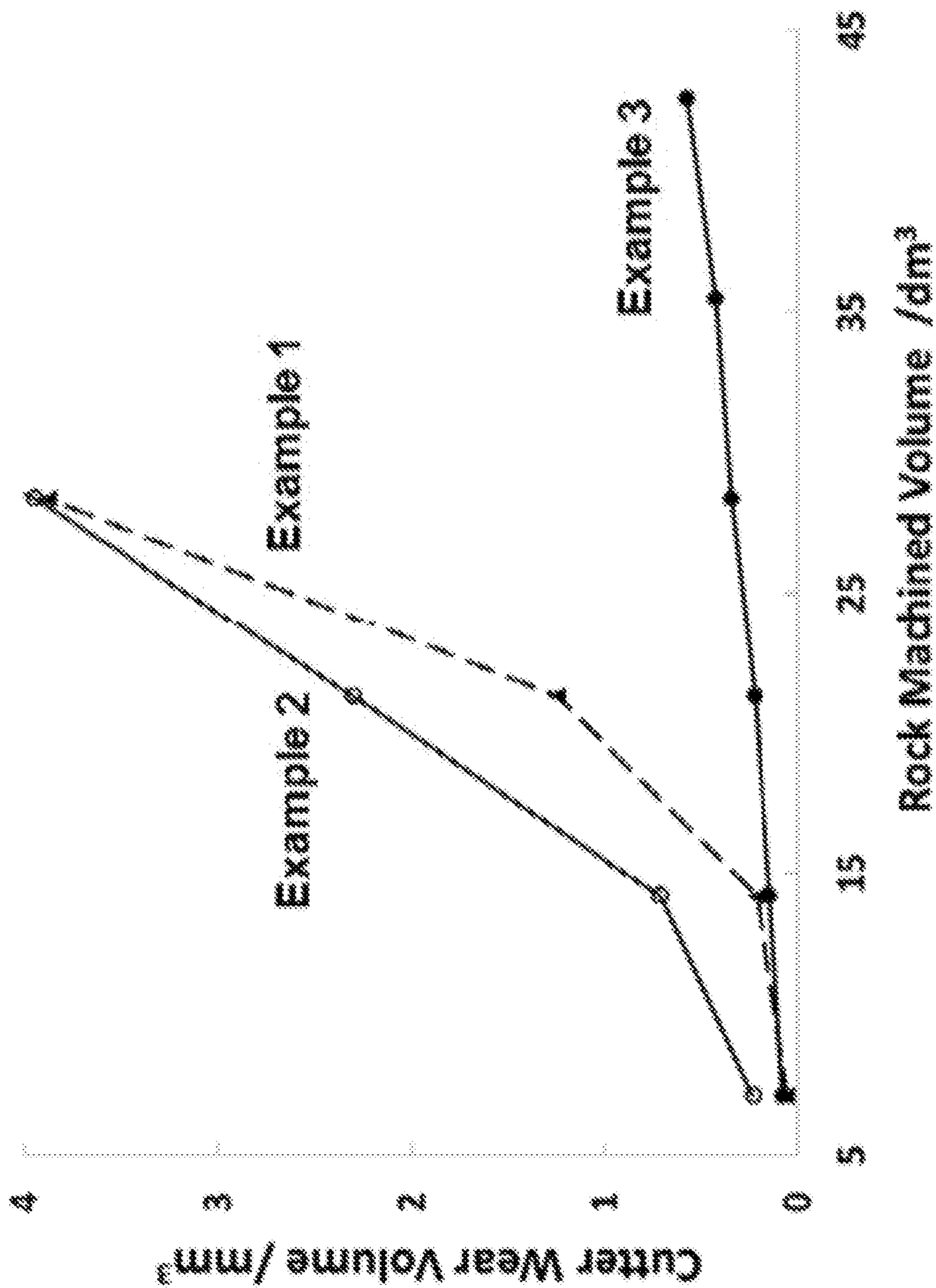


FIG. 5

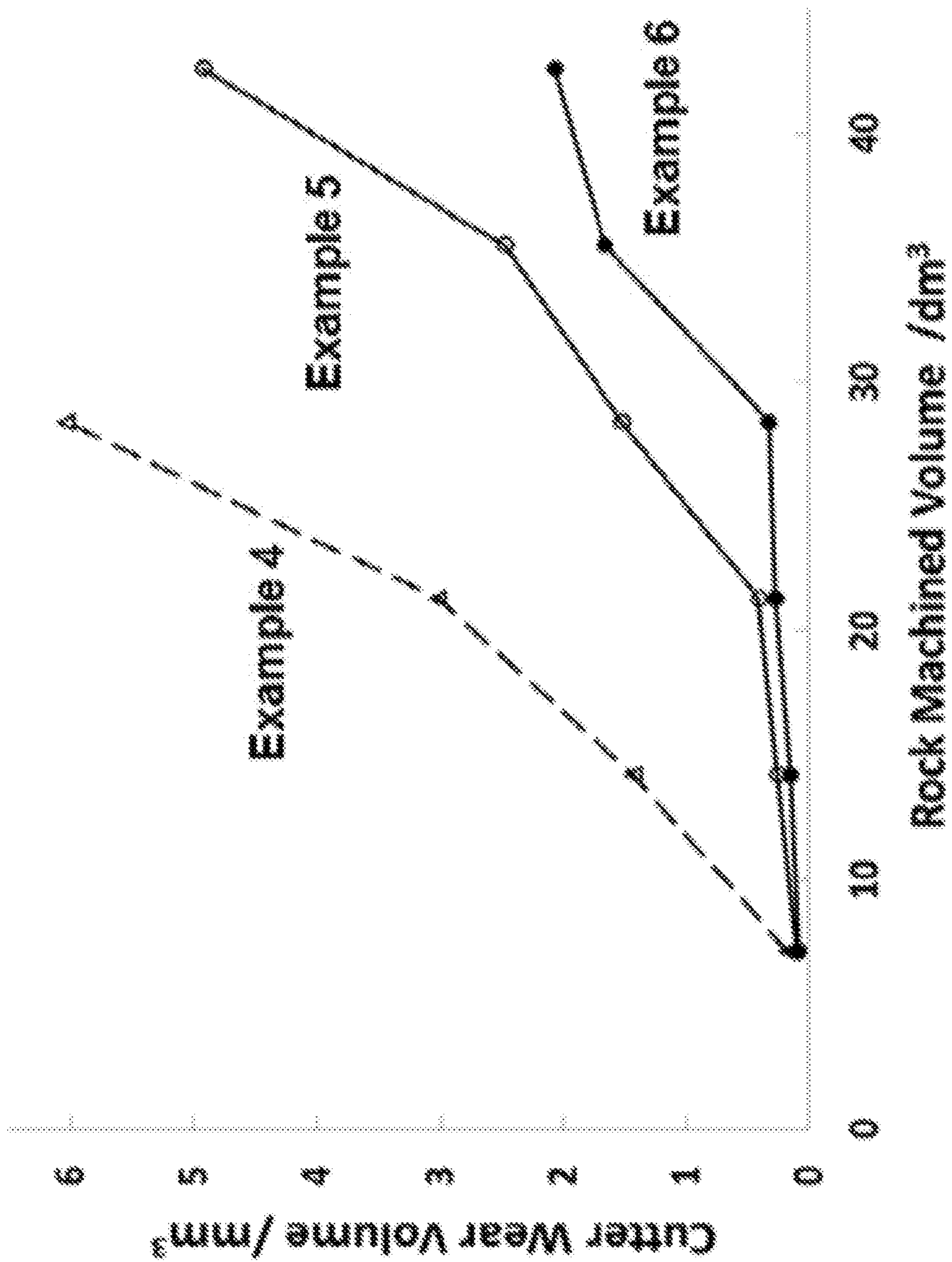


FIG. 6

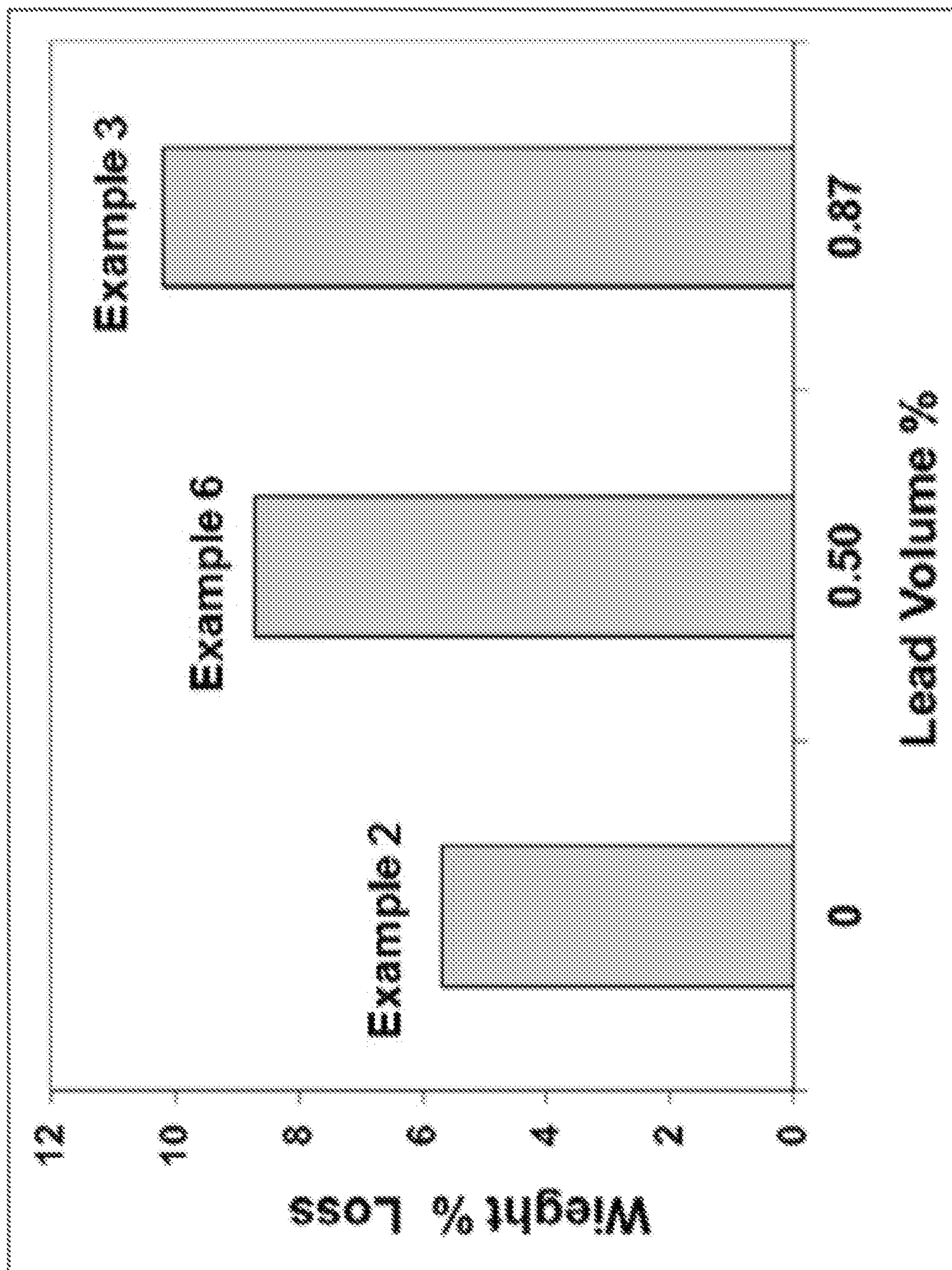


FIG. 7

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**POLYCRYSTALLINE DIAMOND CUTTERS
HAVING NON-CATALYTIC MATERIAL
ADDITION AND METHODS OF MAKING
THE SAME**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS

None.

TECHNICAL FIELD AND INDUSTRIAL
APPLICABILITY

The present disclosure relates generally to cutters made from superhard abrasive materials and, more particularly, to cutters made from polycrystalline diamond having a non-catalytic material addition for enhanced abrasion resistance, and methods of making the same.

BACKGROUND

Polycrystalline diamond (“PCD”) compacts are used in a variety of mechanical applications, for example in material removal operations, as bearing surfaces, and in wire-draw operations. PCD compacts are often used in the petroleum industry in the removal of material in downhole drilling. The PCD compacts are formed as cutting elements, a number of which are attached to drill bits, for example, roller-cone drill bits and fixed-cutter drill bits.

PCD cutters typically include a superabrasive diamond layer, referred to as a polycrystalline diamond body that is attached to a substrate. The polycrystalline diamond body may be formed in a high pressure high temperature (HPHT) process, in which diamond grains are held at pressures and temperatures at which the diamond particles bond to one another.

As is conventionally known, the diamond particles are introduced to the HPHT process in the presence of a catalyst material that, when subjected to the conditions of the HPHT process, promotes formation of inter-diamond bonds. The catalyst material may be embedded in a support substrate, for example, a cemented tungsten carbide substrate having cobalt. The catalyst material may infiltrate the diamond particles from the support substrate. Following the HPHT process, the diamond particles may be sintered to one another and attached to the support substrate.

While the catalyst material promotes formation of the inter-diamond bonds during the HPHT process, the presence of the catalyst material in the sintered diamond body after the completion of the HPHT process may also reduce the stability of the polycrystalline diamond body at elevated temperatures. Some of the diamond grains may undergo a back-conversion to a softer non-diamond form of carbon (for example, graphite or amorphous carbon) at elevated temperatures. Further, mismatch of the coefficients of thermal expansion may induce stress into the diamond lattice causing microcracks in the diamond body. Back-conversion of diamond and stress induced by the mismatch of coefficients of thermal expansion may contribute to a decrease in the toughness, abrasion resistance, and/or thermal stability of the PCD cutter during operation.

Within the present state of the art, reference D1 patent application US 2014/0374172 A1 to Gledhill presents an enhanced abrasion resistant cutter. Gledhill does not mention interstitial regions or leaching. Reference D2 Patent U.S. Pat. No. 8,764,864 to Miess presents a polycrystalline diamond compact which is specific to copper-containing

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material tablets. The present application is directed toward polycrystalline diamond cutter having non-catalytic material that comprises interstitial regions and leaching, which do not use copper. Accordingly, polycrystalline diamond cutters that exhibit increased toughness, abrasion resistance, and/or thermal stability may be desired.

SUMMARY

In one embodiment, a polycrystalline diamond cutter includes a support substrate and a polycrystalline diamond body bonded to the support substrate. The polycrystalline diamond body includes a plurality of diamond grains exhibiting inter-diamond bonding therebetween and defining a plurality of interstitial regions, a non-catalytic material distributed throughout the interstitial regions of the polycrystalline diamond body in a detectable amount, and a catalytic material distributed throughout the interstitial regions of the polycrystalline diamond body in a detectable amount.

In another embodiment, a method of producing a polycrystalline diamond cutter includes combining diamond particles with a non-catalytic material to distribute the non-catalytic material with the diamond particles, assembling a cell assembly having diamond particles and non-catalytic material positioned within a cup, a catalytic material source, and pressure transferring medium surrounding the cup and the catalytic material source. The catalytic material source is positioned proximate to the diamond particles and the non-carbon-catalytic material. The method also includes subjecting the formation cell assembly and its contents to a first high pressure high temperature process to sinter the diamond particles in inter-diamond bonds and to form a polycrystalline diamond composite comprising a polycrystalline diamond body having entrained non-catalytic material. The method further includes leaching at least a portion of accessible catalytic material from the polycrystalline diamond body, and attaching the polycrystalline diamond body to a support substrate in a second high pressure high temperature process to bond the polycrystalline diamond body to the support substrate.

In yet another embodiment, a drill bit includes a material removal portion having a plurality of shanks, the material removal portion rotating relative to a base portion and a plurality of polycrystalline diamond cutters that are bonded to the material removal portion at the shanks. The polycrystalline diamond cutters include a support substrate and a polycrystalline diamond body bonded to the support substrate. The polycrystalline diamond body includes a plurality of diamond grains exhibiting inter-diamond bonding therebetween and defining a plurality of interstitial regions, a non-catalytic material distributed throughout the polycrystalline diamond body in a detectable amount, and a catalytic material distributed throughout the polycrystalline diamond body in a detectable amount.

In yet another embodiment, a method of downhole drilling includes positioning a drill bit in a borehole to be drilled. The drill bit includes a material removal portion having a plurality of shanks, the material removal portion rotating relative to a base portion, and a plurality of polycrystalline diamond cutters that are bonded to the material removal portion at the shanks. The polycrystalline diamond cutters include a support substrate and a polycrystalline diamond body bonded to the support substrate. The polycrystalline diamond body includes a plurality of diamond grains exhibiting inter-diamond bonding therebetween and defining a plurality of interstitial regions and a non-catalytic material distributed throughout the polycrystalline diamond body in

a detectable amount. The method further includes operating the rotary drill bit to rotate the material removal portion relative to the base portion with torque and axial force to remove material along the borehole.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing summary, as well as the following detailed description of the embodiments, will be better understood when read in conjunction with the appended drawings. It should be understood that the embodiments depicted are not limited to the precise arrangements and instrumentalities shown.

FIG. 1 is a schematic side cross-sectional view of a PCD cutter according to one or more embodiments shown or described herein;

FIG. 2 is a detailed schematic side cross-sectional view of the PCD cutter of FIG. 1A shown at location A;

FIG. 3 is a schematic flow chart depicting a manufacturing process of a PCD cutter according to one or more embodiments shown or described herein;

FIG. 4 is a schematic perspective view of a drill bit having a plurality of PCD cutters according to one or more embodiments shown or described herein;

FIG. 5 is a plot of data comparing the wear of PCD cutters according to one or more embodiments shown or described herein;

FIG. 6 is a plot of data comparing the wear of PCD cutters according to one or more embodiments shown or described herein; and

FIG. 7 is a plot of data comparing weight loss of cutters according to one or more embodiments shown or described herein in a leaching process.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present disclosure is directed to polycrystalline diamond cutters and drill bits incorporating the same. The polycrystalline diamond cutters include a support substrate and a polycrystalline diamond body that is attached to the support substrate. The polycrystalline diamond body includes a plurality of diamond grains that exhibit inter-diamond bonding. The diamond grains define a plurality of interstitial regions between the individual grains. The interstitial regions between the diamond grains may include materials that were introduced or formed during fabrication of the polycrystalline diamond body, including a non-catalytic material that is distributed throughout the polycrystalline diamond body. The non-catalytic material is present throughout the polycrystalline diamond body in a detectable amount, for example, in an amount detectable by X-ray fluorescence techniques. The polycrystalline diamond cutters may be attached to a rotary drill bit for use in downhole drilling applications. Polycrystalline diamond cutters incorporating non-catalytic material and rotary drill bits incorporating the same are described in greater detail below.

It is to be understood that this disclosure is not limited to the particular methodologies, systems and materials described, as these may vary. It is also to be understood that the terminology used in the description is for the purpose of describing the particular versions or embodiments only, and is not intended to limit the scope. For example, as used herein, the singular forms “a,” “an,” and “the” include plural references unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. In addition, the word “comprising” as used herein is intended to mean “including but not limited to.” Unless defined

otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meanings as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art.

Unless otherwise indicated, all numbers expressing quantities of ingredients, properties such as size, weight, reaction conditions and so forth used in the specification and claims are to be understood as being modified in all instances by the term “about”. Accordingly, unless indicated to the contrary, the numerical parameters set forth in the following specification and attached claims are approximations that may vary depending upon the desired properties sought to be obtained by the end user. At the very least, and not as an attempt to limit the application of the doctrine of equivalents to the scope of the claims, each numerical parameter should at least be construed in light of the number of reported significant digits and by applying ordinary rounding techniques.

As used herein, the term “about” means plus or minus 10% of the numerical value of the number with which it is being used. Therefore, “about 40” means in the range of 36-44.

As used herein, the term “non-catalytic material” refers to an additive that is introduced to the polycrystalline diamond body, and that is not catalytic with carbon in forming diamond and inter-diamond grain bonds. Non-catalytic materials do not include hard-phase materials that may be introduced to the polycrystalline diamond body from the support substrate or reaction products that are formed in the polycrystalline diamond body during the HPHT processes.

Polycrystalline diamond compacts (or “PCD compacts”, as used hereafter) may represent a volume of crystalline diamond grains with embedded foreign material filling the inter-granular spaces. In one example, a PCD compact includes a plurality of crystalline diamond grains that are bound to each other by strong inter-diamond bonds and forming a rigid polycrystalline diamond body, and the inter-granular regions, disposed between the bound grains and filled with a non-diamond material (e.g., a catalytic material such as cobalt or its alloys), which was used to promote diamond bonding during fabrication of the PCD compact. Suitable metal solvent catalysts may include the metal in Group VIII of the Periodic table. PCD cutting elements (or “PCD cutter”, as is used hereafter) include the above mentioned polycrystalline diamond body attached to a suitable support substrate (for example, cemented tungsten carbide-cobalt (WC—Co)). The attachment between the polycrystalline diamond body and the substrate may be made by virtue of the presence of a catalyst, for example cobalt metal. In another embodiment, the polycrystalline diamond body may be attached to the support substrate by brazing. In another embodiment, a PCD compact includes a plurality of crystalline diamond grains that are strongly bound to each other by a hard amorphous carbon material, for example a-C or t-C carbon. In another embodiment, a PCD compact includes a plurality of crystalline diamond grains, which are not bound to each other, but instead are bound together by foreign bonding materials such as borides, nitrides, or carbides, for example, SiC.

As discussed above, conventional PCD cutters are used in a variety of industries and applications in material removal operations. PCD cutters are typically used in non-ferrous metal removal operations and in downhole drilling operations in the petroleum industry. Conventional PCD cutters exhibit high toughness, strength, and abrasion resistance because of the inter-granular inter-diamond bonding of the diamond grains that make up the polycrystalline diamond bodies of the PCD cutters. The inter-diamond bonding of the

diamond grains of the polycrystalline diamond body are promoted during an HPHT process by a catalytic material. However, at elevated temperature, the catalytic material and its byproducts that remain present in the polycrystalline diamond body after the HPHT process may promote back-

conversion of diamond to non-diamond carbon forms and may induce stress into the diamond lattice due to the mismatch in the coefficient of thermal expansion of the materials. It is conventionally known to remove or deplete portions of the catalytic material to improve the thermal stability of the diamond body. The most common method of removing the catalytic material is a leaching process in which the PCD compact is introduced to a leaching medium, for example, an aqueous acid solution. The leaching medium may be selected from a variety of conventionally-known compositions in which the catalytic material is known to dissolve. By dissolving and removing at least a portion of the catalytic material from the PCD compact, the abrasion resistance of the PCD compact may be increased due to the reduction in back-conversion rate of the diamond in the polycrystalline diamond body to non-diamond carbon forms and the reduction in materials having mismatched coefficients of thermal expansion. However, a portion of catalytic material may still remain in the diamond body of the PCD compact that have been subjected to the leaching process. The interstitial regions between diamond grains may form "trapped" or "entrained" volumes into which the leaching medium has limited or no accessibility. Therefore, these trapped volumes remain populated with the constituents of the PCD formation process. The trapped volumes that contain catalytic material contribute to the degradation of the abrasion resistance of the PCD cutter at elevated temperature that is generated during use of the PCD cutter to remove material. Thus, reduction of trapped catalytic material may improve the abrasion resistance of PCD compact cutters.

The present disclosure is directed to polycrystalline diamond cutters that incorporate a non-catalytic material that is distributed throughout the polycrystalline diamond body. The non-catalytic material may be selected from a variety of materials, including metals, metal alloys, metalloids, semiconductors, and combinations thereof. In particular examples, the non-catalytic material may be lead or bismuth. The non-catalytic material may be introduced to the diamond particles prior to or concurrently with the HPHT process. The non-catalytic material may be distributed throughout the polycrystalline diamond body evenly or unevenly, as well as by forming a distribution pattern. The non-catalytic material may reduce the amount of catalytic material that is present in the polycrystalline diamond body following the HPHT process. Further, the non-catalytic material may reduce the amount of catalytic material that is present in the polycrystalline diamond body following a catalyst depletion or leaching process in which both the non-catalytic material and the catalytic material are removed from the portions of the polycrystalline diamond body or from the entire polycrystalline diamond body. Additionally, the non-catalytic material may increase the removal rate (or the "leaching rate") of the catalyst material from the polycrystalline diamond body.

Because of the reduction of the catalytic material in the polycrystalline diamond body, polycrystalline diamond cutters according to the present disclosure exhibit performance that exceeds that of conventional PCD cutters in at least one of toughness, strength, and abrasion resistance.

Referring now to FIGS. 1 and 2, a PCD cutter 100 is depicted. The PCD cutter 100 includes a support substrate

110 and a polycrystalline diamond body 120 that is attached to the support substrate 110. The polycrystalline diamond body 120 includes a plurality of diamond grains 122 that are bonded to one another, including being bonded to one another through inter-diamond bonding. The bonded diamond grains 122 form a diamond lattice that extends along the polycrystalline diamond body 120. The diamond body 120 also includes a plurality of interstitial regions 124 between the diamond grains. The interstitial regions 124 represent a space between the diamond grains. In at least some of the interstitial regions 124, a non-carbon material is present. In some of the interstitial regions 124, a non-catalytic material is present. In other interstitial regions 124, catalytic material is present. In yet other interstitial regions 124, both non-catalytic material and catalytic material is present. In yet other interstitial regions 124, at least one of catalytic material, non-catalytic material, swept material of the support substrate 110, for example, cemented tungsten carbide, and reaction by-products of the HPHT process are present. Non-carbon, non-catalytic or catalytic materials may be bonded to diamond grains. Alternatively, non-carbon, non-catalytic or catalytic materials may be not bonded to diamond grains.

The catalytic material may be a metallic catalyst, including metallic catalysts selected from Group VIII of the periodic table, for example, cobalt, nickel, iron, or alloys thereof. The catalytic material may be present in a greater concentration in the support substrate 110 than in the polycrystalline diamond body 120, and may promote attachment of the support substrate 110 to the polycrystalline diamond body 120 in the HPHT process, as will be discussed below. The polycrystalline diamond body 120 may include an attachment region 128 that is rich in catalyst material promotes bonding between the polycrystalline diamond body 120 and the support substrate 110. In other embodiments, the concentration of the catalytic material may be greater in the polycrystalline diamond body 120 than in the support substrate 110. In yet other embodiments, the catalytic material may differ from the catalyst of the support substrate 110. The catalytic material may be a metallic catalyst reaction-by-product, for example catalyst-carbon, catalyst-tungsten, catalyst-chromium, or other catalyst compounds, which also may have lower catalytic activity towards diamond than a metallic catalyst.

The non-catalytic material may be selected from a variety of materials that are non-catalytic with the carbon-diamond conversion and include, for example, metals, metal alloys, metalloids, semiconductors, and combinations thereof. The non-catalytic material may be selected from one of copper, silver, gold, aluminum, silicon, gallium, lead, tin, bismuth, indium, thallium, tellurium, antimony, polonium, and alloys thereof.

Both non-catalytic material and catalytic material may be present in a detectable amount in the polycrystalline diamond body of the PCD cutter. Presence of such materials may be identified by X-ray fluorescence, for example using a XRF analyzer available from Bruker AXS, Inc. of Madison, Wis., USA. Presence of such material may also be identified using X-ray diffraction, energy dispersive spectroscopy, or other suitable techniques.

The non-catalytic material may be introduced to the unbonded diamond particles prior to the first HPHT process in an amount that is in a range from about 0.1 vol. % to about 5 vol. % of the diamond body 120, for example an amount that is in a range from about 0.2 vol % to about 2 vol. % of the diamond body 120. In an exemplary embodiment, non-catalytic material may be introduced to the unbonded dia-

mond in an amount from about 0.33 to about 1 vol. %. Following the first HPHT process and leaching, the non-catalytic material content is reduced by at least about 50%, including being reduced in a range from about 50% to about 80%.

In the first HPHT process, catalytic material may be introduced to the diamond powders. The catalytic material may be present in an amount that is in a range from about 0.1 vol % to about 30 vol. % of the diamond body **120**, for example an amount that is in a range from about 0.3 vol. % to about 10 vol. % of the diamond body **120**, including being an amount of about 5 vol. % of the diamond body **120**. In an exemplary embodiment, catalytic material may be introduced to the unbonded diamond is an amount from about 4.5 vol. % to about 6 vol. %. Following the first HPHT process and leaching, the catalytic material is reduced by at least about 50%, including being reduced in a range from about 50% to about 90%.

The non-catalytic material and the catalytic material may be non-uniformly distributed in the bulk of the polycrystalline diamond cutter **100** such that the respective concentrations of non-catalytic material and catalytic material vary at different positions within the polycrystalline diamond body **120**. In one embodiment the non-catalytic material may be arranged to have a concentration gradient that is evaluated along a longitudinal axis **102** of the polycrystalline diamond cutter **100**. The concentration of the non-catalytic material may be higher at positions evaluated distally from the substrate **110** than at positions evaluated proximally to the substrate **110**. In opposite, the concentration of the catalytic material may be greater at positions evaluated proximally to the substrate **110** than at positions evaluated distally from the substrate **110**. In yet another embodiment, the concentrations of the non-catalytic material and the catalytic material may undergo a step change when evaluated in a longitudinal axis **192** of the polycrystalline diamond cutter **100**. In yet another embodiment, the concentrations of the non-catalytic material and the catalytic material may exhibit a variety of patterns or configurations. Independent of the concentration of the non-catalytic material and the catalytic material in the polycrystalline diamond body **120**, however, both non-catalytic material and catalytic material may be detectible along surfaces proximately and distally located relative to the substrate **110**.

In another embodiment, the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may exhibit relatively high amounts of the catalytic material at positions proximate to the substrate **110** and at which the catalytic material forms a bond between the polycrystalline diamond body **120** and the substrate **110**. In some embodiments, at positions outside of such an attachment zone, the non-catalytic material and the catalytic material maintain the concentration variation described above.

PCD cutters **100** according to the present disclosure may exhibit improved performance as compared to conventionally produced PCD cutters when evaluated in terms of abrasion resistance and/or toughness. The performance of PCD cutters **100** according to the present disclosure may particularly exhibit improved performance when subjected to conditions of elevated temperature. Such conditions may occur when the PCD cutters **100** are used in aggressive material removal operations, for example, aggressive downhole drilling operations in the petroleum industry. Performance of the PCD cutter **100** with respect to abrasion resistance may be quantified in laboratory testing, for example using a simulated cutting operation in which the

PCD cutter **100** is used to machine an analogous material that replicates an end user application.

In one example used to replicate a downhole drilling application, the PCD cutter **100** is held in a vertical turret lathe (“VTL”) to machine granite. Parameters of the VTL test may be varied to replicate desired test conditions. In one example, the cutter that is subjected to the VTL test is water cooled. In one example, the PCD cutter **100** was positioned to maintain a depth of cut of about 0.017 mm/pass at a cross-feed rate of about 0.17 mm/revolution and a cutter velocity of 122 surface meters per minute. The VTL test introduces a wear scar into the PCD cutter **100** along the position of contact between the PCD cutter **100** and the granite. The size of the wear scar is compared to the material removed from the granite to evaluate the abrasion resistance of the PCD cutter **100**. The life of the PCD cutter **100** may be calculated based on the material removed from the granite as compared to the size of the wear scar abrades through the polycrystalline diamond body **120** and into the support substrate **110**.

In another example, the PCD cutter **100** is subjected to an interrupted milling test in which the PCD cutter **100** is periodically removes material from a workpiece and then is brought out of contact with the workpiece. The interrupted milling test may evaluate thermal resistance of the PCD cutter **100**.

In some embodiments, PCD cutters **100** according to the present disclosure exhibit increased abrasion resistance as compared to conventionally produced PCD cutters. In some embodiments, PCD cutters **100** according to the present disclosure may exhibit at least about 30% less wear with an equivalent amount of material removed from the granite as compared to conventionally produced PCD cutters, including exhibiting about 78% less wear than a conventional cutter, including exhibiting about 90% less wear than a conventional cutter. In some embodiments, the PCD cutters **100** according to the present disclosure may exhibit at least about 30% more material removal from the workpiece as evaluated at the end of life of the PCD cutter as compared to a conventional PCD cutter.

PCD cutters **100** according to the present disclosure exhibit a lower concentration of catalytic material in trapped interstitial regions between the bonded diamond grains as compared to conventionally processed cutters. As discussed above, because the catalytic material that is positioned within the trapped interstitial regions may contribute to back-conversion of the diamond grains to non-diamond forms of carbon. The propensity of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** of the PCD cutter **100** to back-convert to non-diamond forms of carbon may be correlated to the high-temperature abrasion resistance of the PCD cutter **100**. Reducing the amount of the catalytic material within the trapped interstitial regions between diamond grains of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may reduce the rate of back-conversion of the PCD cutter **100**. Further, reducing the amount of catalytic material within the trapped interstitial regions between diamond grains of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may reduce stress that is induced into the diamond lattice caused by a mismatch in the coefficients of thermal expansion of the diamond grains and the catalytic material. Therefore, the reduction in the catalytic material within the trapped interstitial regions between the diamond grains resulting from the introduction of non-catalytic material into the polycrystalline diamond body **120**, improves performance of the PCD cutter **100** as compared to conventionally produced PCD cutters.

Still referring to FIG. 1, some embodiments of the PCD cutter 100 include a crown portion 402 that is positioned within the polycrystalline diamond body 120 and along a surface opposite the substrate 110. The crown portion 402 is made from a material that is dissimilar from the material of the polycrystalline diamond body 120 and the support substrate 110. The crown portion 402 may extend into the diamond body 120 from the top surface of the PCD cutter 100. The crown portion 402 may extend to a depth that is less than about 1 mm from the support substrate 110 including being about 300 μm from the support substrate 110. The crown portion 402 may limit the depth that the catalytic material 94 sweeps into the polycrystalline diamond body 120 from the second support substrate 110 during the second HPHT process. The crown portion 402 may provide locally modified material properties of the PCD cutter 100. In one embodiment, the crown portion 402 may include, in addition to the bonded diamond grains and the non-catalytic material and the catalytic material in detectable amounts, a material selected from the group consisting of aluminum, aluminum carbide, silicon, and silicon carbide.

In some embodiments, the polycrystalline diamond body 120 may be free of such materials outside of the attachment region 128.

PDC cutters according to the present disclosure may be fabricated using a so-called "double press" HPHT process. Diamond particles may first be subjected to a first HPHT process to form a polycrystalline diamond compact having a polycrystalline diamond body that is formed through sintering with a catalytic material source. In one embodiment, the catalytic material source is provided integrally with a support substrate (a first support substrate). Substantially all of the support substrate is removed from the polycrystalline diamond body, the polycrystalline diamond body is machined to a desired shape, and the polycrystalline diamond body is leached to remove substantially all of the accessible non-catalytic material and catalytic material from the interstitial spaces of the polycrystalline diamond body. The leached polycrystalline diamond body is subsequently cleaned of leaching debris and bonded to a support substrate in a second HPHT process, thus forming a PCD compact. This PCD compact is subsequently finished according to conventionally known procedures to the final shape desirable for the end user application.

Referring now to FIG. 3, a flowchart depicted the manufacturing procedure 200 is provided. Diamond particles 90 are mixed with the non-catalytic material 92 in step 202. The size of the diamond particles 90 may be selected based on the desired mechanical properties of the polycrystalline diamond cutter that is finally produced. It is generally believed that a decrease in grain size increases the abrasion resistance of the polycrystalline diamond cutter, but decreases the toughness of the polycrystalline diamond cutter. Further, it is generally believed that a decrease in grain size results in an increase in interstitial volume of the PCD compact. The porosity represents the total accessible interstitial space of the polycrystalline diamond body. In one embodiment, the diamond particles 90 may have a single mode median volumetric particle size distribution (D50) in a range from about 10 μm to about 100 μm , for example having a D50 in a range from about 14 μm to about 50 μm , for example having a D50 of about 30 μm to about 32 μm . In other embodiments, the diamond particles 90 may have a D50 of about 14 μm , or about 17 μm , or about 30 μm , or about 32 μm . In other embodiments, the diamond particles 90 may have a multimodal particle size, wherein the diamond particles 90 are selected from two or more single

mode populations having different values of D50, including multimodal distributions having two, three, or four different values of D50.

The non-catalytic material 92 may be introduced to step 202 as a powder. In other embodiments, the non-catalytic material 92 may be coated onto the unbonded diamond particles. The particle size of the non-catalytic material may be in a range from about 0.005 μm to about 100 μm , for example being in a range from about 10 μm to about 50 μm .

The diamond particles 90 and the non-catalytic material 92 may be dry mixed with one another using, for example, a commercial TURBULA® Shaker-Mixer available from Glen Mills, Inc. of Clifton, N.J. or an acoustic mixer available from Resodyn Acoustic Mixers, Inc. of Butte, Mont. to provide a generally uniform and well mixed combination. In other embodiments, the mixing particles may be placed inside a bag or container and held under vacuum or in a protective atmosphere during the blending process.

In other embodiments, the diamond particles 90 and the non-catalytic material 92 may be added to a suitable solvent (for example, polyethylene glycol) to form a slurry. The slurry may be continuously mixed to provide an even distribution of the non-catalytic material 92 relative to the diamond particles 90. The solvent may be driven off from the diamond particles 90 and the non-catalytic material 92, for example by spray drying or evaporating in a rotary evaporator under reduced pressure. In some embodiments, the dried slurry results in a well-mixed dry powder of diamond particles 90 and non-catalytic material 92 that is free-flowing.

In other embodiments, the non-catalytic material 92 may be positioned separately from the diamond particles 90. During the first HPHT process, the non-catalytic materials 92 may "sweep" from their original location and through the diamond particles 90, thereby positioning the non-catalytic materials 92 prior to sintering of the diamond particles 90. Subsequent to sweeping of the non-catalytic materials 92, the catalytic material 94 may be swept through the diamond particles 90 during the first HPHT process, thereby promoting formation of inter-diamond bonds between the diamond particles 90 and sintering of the diamond particles 90 to form the polycrystalline diamond body 120 of the polycrystalline diamond compact 80.

The diamond particles 90 and the non-catalytic material 92 may be positioned within a cup 142 that is made of a refractory material, for example tantalum, niobium, vanadium, molybdenum, tungsten, or zirconium, as shown in step 204. The support substrate 144 is positioned along an open end of the cup 142 and is optionally welded to the cup 142 to form cell assembly 140 that encloses diamond particles 90 and the non-catalytic material 92. The support substrate 144 may be selected from a variety of hard phase materials including, for example, cemented tungsten carbide, cemented tantalum carbide, or cemented titanium carbide. In one embodiment, the support substrate 144 may include cemented tungsten carbide having free carbons, as described in U.S. Provisional Application Nos. 62/055,673, 62/055,677, and 62/055,679, the entire disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference. The support substrate 144 may include a pre-determined quantity of catalytic material 94. Using a cemented tungsten carbide-cobalt system as an example, the cobalt is the catalytic material 94 that is infiltrated into the diamond particles 90 during the HPHT process. In other embodiments, the cell assembly 140 may include additional catalytic material (not shown) that is positioned between the support substrate 144 and the dia-

mond particles **90**. In further other embodiments, the cell assembly **140** may include non-catalytic material **92** that is positioned between the diamond particles **90** and the support substrate **144** or between the diamond particles **90** and the additional catalytic material (not shown).

The cell assembly **140**, which includes the diamond particles **90**, the non-catalytic material **92**, and the support substrate **144**, is introduced to a press that is capable of and adapted to introduce ultra-high pressures and elevated temperatures to the cell assembly **140** in an HPHT process, as shown in step **208**. The press type may be a belt press, a cubic press, or other suitable presses. The pressures and temperatures of the HPHT process that are introduced to the cell assembly **140** are transferred to contents of the cell assembly **140**. In particular, the HPHT process introduces pressure and temperature conditions to the diamond particles **90** at which diamond is stable and inter-diamond bonds form. The temperature of the HPHT process may be at least about 1000° C. (e.g., about 1200° C. to about 1800° C., or about 1300° C. to about 1600° C.) and the pressure of the HPHT process may be at least 4.0 GPa (e.g., about 5.0 GPa to about 10.0 GPa, or about 5.0 GPa to about 8.0 GPa) for a time sufficient for adjacent diamond particles **90** to bond to one another, thereby forming an integral PCD compact having the polycrystalline diamond body **120** and the support substrate **144** that are bonded to one another.

Subsequent to formation of the integral PCD, the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be separated from the support substrate **144** using a variety of conventionally known techniques, including chemically dissolution and machining techniques, such as grinding, electrical discharge machining, or laser ablation, as shown in step **210**. The polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be separated from a majority of the support substrate **144** with a portion of the support substrate **144** remaining integral with the polycrystalline diamond body **120**. Following removal of the support substrate **144**, the polycrystalline diamond body **120** is machined to a desired shape for subsequent processing. The polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be shaped into a cylindrical shaped disc in which generally planar faces and a generally cylindrical body of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** are formed.

The introduction of the non-catalytic material **92** to the polycrystalline diamond body **120** prior to the first HPHT process may result in a reduction of catalytic material **94** that is present in the polycrystalline diamond body **120** following the HPHT process and prior to initiation of any subsequent leaching process. As compared to conventional cutters that are produced without the introduction of the non-catalytic material **92**, unleached diamond bodies **120** produced according to the present disclosure may contain, for example, about 10% less catalytic material **94** when evaluated prior to leaching.

The polycrystalline diamond body **120** may undergo a leaching process in which the catalytic material is removed from the polycrystalline diamond body **120**. In one example of a leaching process, the polycrystalline diamond body **120** is introduced to an acid bath to remove the remaining support substrate **144** from the polycrystalline diamond body **120**, as shown in step **212**. The leaching process may also remove non-catalytic material **92** and catalytic material **94** from the polycrystalline diamond body **120** that is accessible to the acid. Suitable acids may be selected based on the solubility of the non-catalytic material **92** and the catalytic material **94** that is present in the polycrystalline diamond body. Examples of such acids including, for example and without limitation, ferric chloride, cupric chlo-

ride, nitric acid, hydrochloric acid, hydrofluoric acid, aqua regia, or solutions or mixtures thereof. The acid bath may be maintained at a pre-selected temperature to modify the rate of removal of the non-catalytic material **92** and the catalytic material **94** from the polycrystalline diamond body **120**, including being in a temperature range from about 10° C. to about 95° C. In some embodiments, the acid bath may be maintained at elevated pressures that increase the liquid boiling temperature and thus allow the use of elevated temperatures, for example being at a temperature of greater than about 110° C. The polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be subjected to the leaching process for a time sufficient to remove the desired quantity of non-catalytic material **92** and catalytic material **94** from the polycrystalline diamond body. The polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be subjected to the leaching process for a time that ranges from about one hour to about one month, including ranging from about one day to about 7 days

In some embodiments, the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be maintained in the leaching process until the polycrystalline diamond body **120** is at least partially leached. In polycrystalline diamond bodies **120** that are partially leached, the exterior regions of the polycrystalline diamond bodies **120** that are positioned along the outer surfaces of the polycrystalline diamond bodies **120** have the accessible interstitial regions depleted of non-catalytic material **92** and/or catalytic material **94**, while the interior regions of the polycrystalline diamond bodies **120** are rich with non-catalytic material **92** and/or catalytic material **94**. In other embodiments, the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be maintained in the acid bath until complete leaching of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** is realized. Complete leaching of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be defined as removal from the polycrystalline diamond body **120** of all of the non-catalytic material **92** and the catalytic material **94** that is accessible to the leaching media.

In some embodiments, the extent of the leaching may be monitored by weighing the polycrystalline diamond body **120** after a pre-defined period of time. As the change in the weight loss of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** approaches a threshold value (for example, 10% loss of the unleached polycrystalline diamond body **120**), the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be considered to be completely leached. Because the polycrystalline diamond body **120** is leached without the support substrate **144**, the leach fronts may extend from opposing sides of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** and from the perimeter surface of the polycrystalline diamond body **120**. When the leach fronts from the opposing sides of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** meet, the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may be considered to be completely leached. In some embodiments, the extent of leaching may be monitored by the loss of density of the diamond body.

While some diamond bodies **120** may be at least partially leached, reference is made below to a completely leached polycrystalline diamond body **120** to discuss the effects of the addition of the non-catalytic material **92** to the polycrystalline diamond body **120**.

In some embodiments, an unleached polycrystalline diamond body may have non-catalytic material **92** and catalytic material **94** at greater than about 4 vol. % of the polycrystalline diamond body **120**, including being from about 4 vol. % to about 15 vol. %. In comparison, a completely leached polycrystalline diamond body **120** may have non-catalytic material **92** and catalytic material **94** that is less than about 50% less than the unleached polycrystalline diamond body **120**, for example at about 42 vol. % less than the polycrys-

talline diamond body **120**. A completely leached polycrystalline diamond body **120** may have non-catalytic material **92** and catalytic material **94** being from about 0.25 vol. % to about 6 vol. %, for example, being from about 0.2 vol. % to about 1 vol. %. In general, the extent of loss of non-catalytic material and catalytic material in a completely leached polycrystalline diamond body **120** is determined the material structure and composition, for example by the precursor diamond grain size and the particle size distribution.

As discussed above, the introduction of the non-catalytic material to the polycrystalline diamond body **120** reduces the concentration of the catalytic material **94** in the polycrystalline diamond body **120** prior to leaching. The introduction of the non-catalytic material **92** to the polycrystalline diamond body **120** also reduces the concentration of the catalytic material **94** that remains present in the trapped interstitial volumes of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** following complete leaching of the polycrystalline diamond body **120**. As compared to conventional cutters that are produced without the introduction of the non-catalytic material **92**, diamond bodies **120** produced according to the present disclosure contain from about 30 vol. % to about 90 vol. % less catalytic material **94** following complete leaching of both of the compared diamond bodies.

The introduction of the non-catalytic material **92** to the polycrystalline diamond body **120** may also increase the leaching rate of the polycrystalline diamond body **120**, such that the duration of time required to obtain complete leaching of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** is reduced as compared to conventionally produced diamond bodies. For example, complete leaching of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** having non-catalytic material **92** according to the present disclosure may be obtained from about 30% to about 60% less time as compared to conventional cutters that are produced without the introduction of the non-catalytic material **92**. In one example, when evaluated after 7 days of introduction to the leaching process, polycrystalline diamond bodies **120** produced according to the present disclosure exhibited from about 40% to about 70% more mass loss than conventional PCD compacts.

Following complete leaching of the polycrystalline diamond body **120**, the polycrystalline diamond body **120** continues to exhibit non-diamond components that are present in the trapped interstitial regions of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** that are positioned between bonded diamond grains in at least detectable amounts. However, the reduction of the non-diamond components (including catalytic material **94**) in the leaching process accessible interstitial regions reduces the content of catalytic material **94** in the polycrystalline diamond body **120** and increases the thermal stability of the polycrystalline diamond body **120**.

Referring again to FIG. 3, the completely leached polycrystalline diamond body **120** is assembled into a second cell in which the polycrystalline diamond body **120** is attached to a support substrate **110** (a second support substrate **110**) and optionally a crown precursor material **400**, as shown in step **214**. The polycrystalline diamond body **120** is positioned proximate to the support substrate **110** and assembled into a cell assembly **240**. The support substrate **110** may be selected from a variety of hard phase materials including, for example, cemented tungsten carbide, cemented tantalum carbide, or cemented titanium carbide. In one embodiment, the support substrate **110** may include cemented tungsten carbide having free carbons, as described in U.S. Provisional Application Nos. 62/055,673, 62/055,677, and 62/055,679. This second support substrate **110** may be made from the same material as the first support substrate

144 discussed above. Alternatively, the second support substrate **110** may be made from a dissimilar material from the first support substrate **144** discussed above. The support substrate **110** may include a quantity of catalytic material **94**.

The support substrate **144** may have an intergranular phase liquidus temperature below 1300° C. at high pressure conditions. Using a cemented tungsten carbide-cobalt system as an example, the cobalt is the catalytic material **94** that is infiltrated into the at least partially leached polycrystalline diamond body **120** during a second HPHT process. In other embodiments, the cell assembly **240** may include additional catalytic material (not shown) that is positioned between the support substrate **110** and the polycrystalline diamond body **120**. The cell assembly **240** includes pressure transferring medium **152** that at least partially surround the polycrystalline diamond body **120** and the support substrate **110**.

The cell assembly **140**, which includes the polycrystalline diamond body **120** and the support substrate **110**, is introduced to a press that is capable of and adapted to introduce ultra-high pressures and elevated temperatures to the cell assembly **140** in a second HPHT process, as shown in step **216**. The pressures and temperatures of the HPHT process that are introduced to the cell assembly **140** are transferred to contents of the cell assembly **140**. In particular, the HPHT process introduces pressure and temperature conditions to the polycrystalline diamond body **120** at which diamond phase is thermodynamically stable. In other embodiments, the HPHT process introduces pressure and temperature conditions to the polycrystalline diamond body **120** at which diamond phase is unstable, which may lead to the formation of non-diamond carbon forms. The temperature of the HPHT process may be selected to be above the melting temperature of the infiltrating material. In one embodiment, the HPHT process may be operated at a temperature of at least about 1000° C. (e.g., about 1200° C. to about 1600° C., or about 1200° C. to about 1300° C.) and the pressure of the HPHT process may be at least 4.0 GPa (e.g., about 5.0 GPa to about 10.0 GPa, or about 5.0 GPa to about 8.0 GPa) for a time sufficient for catalyst material **94** to infiltrate the polycrystalline diamond body **120**, thereby bonding the polycrystalline diamond body **120** to the support substrate **110** and forming an integral PCD compact **82**.

Following formation of the integral PCD compact **82**, the PCD compact **82** may be processed through a variety of finishing operations to remove excess material from the PCD compact **82** and configure the PCD compact **82** for use by an end user, including formation of a PCD cutter **84**, as shown in step **218**. Such finishing operations may include, for example, grinding and polishing the outside diameter of the PCD compact **82**, cutting, grinding, lapping, and polishing the opposing faces (both the support-substrate-side face and the diamond-body-side face) of the PCD compact **82**, and grinding and lapping a chamfer into the PCD compact **82** between the diamond-body-side face and the outer diameter of the PCD compact **82**.

Referring now to FIG. 4, a plurality of PCD cutters **100** according to the present disclosure may be installed in a drill bit **310**, as conventionally known, to perform a downhole drilling operation. The drill bit **310** may be positioned on a drilling assembly **300** that includes a drilling motor **302** that applies torque to the drill bit **310** and an axial drive mechanism **304** that is coupled to the drilling assembly for moving the drilling assembly **300** through a borehole **60** and operable to modify the axial force applied by the drill bit **310** in the borehole **60**. Force applied to the drill bit **310** is referred to as Weight on Bit" ("WOB"). The drilling assembly **300** may also include a steering mechanism that modifies the

axial orientation of the drill assembly **300**, such that the drill bit **310** can be positioned for non-linear downhole drilling.

The drill bit **310** includes a stationary portion **312** and a material removal portion **314**. The material removal portion **314** may rotate relative to the stationary portion **312**. Torque applied by the drilling motor **302** rotates the material removal portion **314** relative to the stationary portion **312**. A plurality of PCD cutters **100** according to the present disclosure are coupled to the material removal portion **314**. The plurality of PCD cutters **100** may be coupled to the material removal portion **314** by a variety of conventionally known methods, including attaching the plurality of PCD cutters **100** to a corresponding plurality of shanks **316** that are coupled to the material removal portion **314**. The PCD cutters **100** may be coupled to the plurality of shanks **316** by a variety of methods, including, for example, brazing, adhesive bonding, or mechanical affixation. In embodiments in which the PCD cutters **100** are brazed to the shanks **316** with a braze filler **318**, at least a portion of the shanks **316**, the braze filler **318**, and at least a portion of the support substrate **110** of the PCD cutter **100** is heated to an elevated temperature while in contact with one another. As the components decrease in temperature, the braze filler **318** solidifies and forms a bond between the support substrate **110** of the PCD cutter **100** and the shanks **316** of the material removal portion **314**. In one embodiment, the brazing filler **318** has a melting temperature that is greater than a melting temperature of the non-catalytic material **92** of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** at ambient pressure conditions. In another embodiment, the brazing filler **318** has a melting temperature that is less than the catalytic material **94** of the polycrystalline diamond body **120** at ambient pressure conditions. In yet another embodiment, the brazing filler **318** has a melting temperature that is less than the liquidus temperature of the catalytic material **94** of the polycrystalline diamond body at ambient pressure conditions.

When the drill bit **310** is positioned in the borehole **60**, the material removal portion **314** rotates about the stationary portion **312** to reposition the PCD cutters **100** relative to the borehole **60**, thereby removing surrounding material from the borehole **60**. Force is applied to the drill bit **310** by the axial drive mechanism **304** in generally the axial orientation of the drill bit **310**. The axial drive mechanism **304** may increase the WOB, thereby increasing the contact force between the PCD cutters **100** and the material of the borehole **60**. As the material removal portion **314** of the drill bit **310** continues to rotate and WOB is maintained on the drill bit **310**, the PCD cutters **100** abrade material of the borehole **60**, and continue the path of the borehole **60** in an orientation that generally corresponds to the axial direction of the drill bit **310**.

The temperature of the PCD cutters **100** may increase with increasing WOB, increasing material removal rates, and increasing cutter wear. As discussed hereinabove, the increase in temperature may contribute to an increase in cutter wear cause by back-conversion of diamond to non-diamond carbon forms. Further, the increase in temperature may increase stresses in the diamond lattice caused by mismatch in the coefficients of thermal expansion of the diamond grains and the catalytic material. In some embodiments, the operating temperature of the PCD cutters **100** at locations proximate to contact with the borehole **60** may have a temperature of greater than about 400° C., including having a temperature of greater than about 500° C., including having a temperature of greater than about 600° C., including have a temperature of greater than about 700° C. In some embodiments, the operating temperature of the PCD

cutters **100** at locations proximate to contact with the borehole **60** may be greater than the melting temperature of the non-catalytic material **92** of the polycrystalline diamond body **120**.

It should now be understood that PCD cutters according to the present disclosure include a polycrystalline diamond body that is coupled to a substrate. The polycrystalline diamond body has a plurality of diamond grains that define a plurality of interstitial regions between bonded diamond grains. Trapped interstitial regions prevent exposure of the interstitial regions to a leaching medium, such as acid. Non-catalyst material and catalyst material is present in these trapped interstitial regions. The non-catalyst material is distributed throughout the polycrystalline diamond body and is present in a detectable amount throughout the polycrystalline diamond body. The non-catalyst material remains in the polycrystalline diamond body from the manufacturing process. The non-catalyst material results in an increase in the leach rate of the PCD compact and in a reduction of catalyst material that is present in the trapped interstitial regions of the polycrystalline diamond body. The reduction of the catalyst material in the trapped interstitial regions of the polycrystalline diamond body increases the abrasion resistance of the PCD cutter at elevated temperatures.

EXAMPLES

Comparative Example 1

An unleached, single press polycrystalline diamond cutter made without removal and reattachment from the support substrate and having no addition of non-catalytic material was produced in accordance with U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/926,696, the entire disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference, with diamond powder having a 17 μm median particle size being bonded to a cemented tungsten carbide-cobalt support substrate. The cutter precursor materials were subjected to a single HPHT process in which a maximum pressure of about 7 GPa and a maximum temperature of about 1550° C. were reached and the materials were maintained above the melting point of the cobalt catalytic material for about 3 minutes.

Following the HPHT process, the integral PCD compact was finished according to conventional techniques to form a PCD cutter having a diameter of about 16 mm, a height of about 13 mm, and a diamond layer thickness of about 2.1 mm with a chamfer along the top surface of about 0.4 mm by 45 degrees.

The PCD cutter was subjected to a VTL abrasion test with the following conditions:

TABLE 1

Test condition	Value
Cutting Orientation	Continuous Face Turning
Cutter Angle	15 degrees
Workpiece	Barre grey granite
Depth of cut	0.017 mm/pass
Crossfeed	0.17 mm/revolution
Traverse Rate	122 surface meters/minute
Coolant	Full flood water
Duration	28 dm ³ of rock removal

At the conclusion of the test in which 28 dm³ of material had been removed from the workpiece, the PCD cutter had lost (worn) a volume of 6.04 mm³. A plot comparing the workpiece removal to the PCD cutter wear is depicted in FIG. 5.

Comparative Example 2

A leached, double press polycrystalline diamond cutter made having no addition of non-catalytic material was produced in accordance with U.S. Provisional Pat. Appl. Nos. 62/055,673, 62/055,677, and 62/055,679, with diamond powder having a 17 μm median particle size being bonded to a cemented tungsten carbide-cobalt support substrate. The cutter pre-cursor materials were subjected to a first HPHT process in which a maximum pressure of about 7 GPa and a maximum temperature of about 1600° C. were reached and the materials were maintained above the melting point of the cobalt catalytic material for about 3 minutes.

Following the first HPHT process, a polycrystalline diamond body having a thickness of about 3.5 mm was removed from the hardmetal-cobalt support substrate and the polycrystalline diamond body's catalyst material was substantially removed by immersing the polycrystalline diamond body in an acid solution, as described hereinabove, thereby creating a thermally stable PCD disc. The PCD disc was planarized by lapping to a thickness of about 2.3 mm. The planarized PCD disc was assembled with a second hardmetal support substrate and a source of aluminum, and was introduced to a second HPHT process in which a maximum pressure of about 6 GPa and a maximum temperature of about 1250° C. were reached and the materials were maintained above the melting point of the cobalt catalytic material for about 5 minutes. The resulting PCD compact was finished using conventional techniques to form a PCD cutter having a diameter of about 16 mm, a height of about 13 mm, and a diamond layer thickness of about 2.1 mm with a chamfer along the top surface of about 0.4 mm by 45 degrees.

The PCD cutter was subjected to a VTL abrasion test according to the conditions listed in Table 1 above. At the conclusion of the test in which 28 dm³ of material had been removed from the workpiece, the PCD cutter had lost (worn) a volume of 1.55 mm³. A plot comparing the workpiece removal to the PCD cutter wear is depicted in FIG. 5.

Example 3

Thermally stable polycrystalline diamond cutters according to the present disclosure were produced according to the parameters of Example 2, but with an introduction of about 0.87 vol. % lead addition to the diamond particles prior to the first HPHT process. The lead was about 99% pure and had a median particle size of about 40 μm . The lead and the diamond powder were dry blended for 1 hour using a TURBULA® blender. All other processing and finishing parameters were completed in accordance with Example 2 presented above. The catalytic material removal proceeded to complete leaching of accessible interstitial cavities about 70% faster than the PCD cutter of Example 2. A comparison of the weight loss of the cutter of Example 3 to the cutter of Example 2 evaluated after 7 days in equivalent leaching medium and leaching conditions is depicted in FIG. 7.

The PCD cutter was subjected to a VTL abrasion test according to the conditions listed in Table 1 above. At the conclusion of the test in which 28 dm³ of material had been removed from the workpiece, the PCD cutter had lost (worn) a volume of 0.3 mm³. A plot comparing the workpiece removal to the PCD cutter wear is depicted in FIG. 5.

Comparative Example 4

An unleached, single press polycrystalline diamond cutter made without removal and reattachment from the support

substrate and having no addition of non-catalytic material was produced in accordance with Example 1 presented above with the exception that the median particle size of the diamond particles was about 21 μm . All other processing and finishing parameters were completed in accordance with Example 1 presented above.

The PCD cutter was subjected to a VTL abrasion test according to the conditions listed in Table 1 above. At the conclusion of the test in which 28 dm³ of material had been removed from the workpiece, the PCD cutter had lost (worn) a volume of 6.04 mm³. A plot comparing the workpiece removal to the PCD cutter wear is depicted in FIG. 6.

Comparative Example 5

A leached, double press polycrystalline diamond cutter made having no addition of non-catalytic material was produced in accordance with Example 2 presented above with the exception that the median particle size of the diamond particles was about 21 μm . All other processing and finishing parameters were completed in accordance with Example 2 presented above.

The PCD cutter was subjected to a VTL abrasion test according to the conditions listed in Table 1 above. At the conclusion of the test in which 28 dm³ of material had been removed from the workpiece, the PCD cutter had lost (worn) a volume of 1.52 mm³. A plot comparing the workpiece removal to the PCD cutter wear is depicted in FIG. 6.

Example 6

A leached, double press polycrystalline diamond cutter made having an addition of non-catalytic material was produced in accordance with Example 3 presented above with the exceptions that the median particle size of the diamond particles was about 21 μm and the non-catalytic material was about 0.5 vol. % lead addition to the diamond particles prior to the first HPHT process. The catalytic material removal proceeded to complete leaching of accessible interstitial cavities about 40% faster than the PCD cutter of Example 2. A comparison of the weight loss of the cutter of Example 6 to the cutters of Example 2 and Example 3 evaluated after 7 days in equivalent leaching medium and leaching conditions is depicted in FIG. 7. All other processing and finishing parameters were completed in accordance with Example 3 presented above.

The PCD cutter was subjected to a VTL abrasion test according to the conditions listed in Table 1 above. At the conclusion of the test in which 28 dm³ of material had been removed from the workpiece, the PCD cutter had lost (worn) a volume of 0.35 mm³. A plot comparing the workpiece removal to the PCD cutter wear is depicted in FIG. 6.

The results of the examples presented hereinabove are reproduced below in Table 2.

TABLE 2

	Diamond Grain Size (μm)	Initial Lead Concentration vol. %	Cutter Wear at 2.8 dm ³ of Workpiece Removal (mm ³)
Example 1	17	0	6.04
Example 2	17	0	1.52
Example 3	17	0.87	0.33
Example 4	21	0	3.88
Example 5	21	0	3.95
Example 6	21	0.5	0.35

What is claimed is:

1. A method of producing a polycrystalline diamond cutter, comprising:

combining diamond particles with a non-catalytic material to distribute the non-catalytic material with the diamond particles;

assembling a cell assembly comprising

diamond particles and non-catalytic material positioned within a cup,

a catalytic material source, the catalytic material source positioned proximate to the diamond particles and the non-catalytic material, and

pressure transferring medium surrounding the cup and the catalytic material source;

subjecting the formation cell assembly and its contents to a first high pressure high temperature process to sinter the diamond particles in inter-diamond bonds and to form a polycrystalline diamond body having entrained non-catalytic material attached to the catalytic material source;

de-attaching the catalytic material source from the polycrystalline diamond body;

leaching substantially all accessible catalytic material from the polycrystalline diamond body such that after leaching the polycrystalline diamond body exhibits a gradient of the non-catalytic material between opposing sides of the polycrystalline diamond body;

providing a support substrate that optionally comprises the catalytic material source; and

subjecting the support substrate and the polycrystalline diamond body to a second high pressure high temperature process to bond the polycrystalline diamond body to the support substrate such that the polycrystalline diamond body is attached to the support substrate at a side of the polycrystalline diamond body having a higher concentration of the non-catalytic material.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the non-catalytic material combined with the diamond particles is provided in a powdered form.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the non-catalytic material is present in the cell assembly in an amount from 0.09 vol. % to 11.1 vol. % of the diamond particles.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein following the first high pressure high temperature process and prior to the leaching process, the non-catalytic material is present in the polycrystalline diamond body in an amount from 0.09 vol. % to 1.1 vol. % of the polycrystalline diamond body, and the catalytic material is present in an amount from 3.6 vol. % to 11 vol. % of the polycrystalline diamond body.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein following the leaching process, the non-catalytic material is present in the polycrystalline diamond body in an amount from 0.09 vol. % to 1.1 vol. % of the polycrystalline diamond body, and the catalytic material is present in an amount from 0.9 vol. % to 3.3 vol. % of the polycrystalline diamond body.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the first high pressure high temperature conditions are in a range from 3.6 GPa to 11 GPa and in a range from 900° C. to 1760° C.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the support substrate comprises cemented tungsten carbide having an intergranular phase liquidus temperature below 1300° C. at high pressure conditions.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein after the second high pressure high temperature process when the polycrystalline diamond body is sintered to the support substrate, the polycrystalline diamond body is partially infiltrated with additional catalytic material from the support substrate.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising leaching accessible non-catalytic material from the polycrystalline diamond body, wherein non-accessible catalytic material and non-accessible non-catalytic material are present after leaching.

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